

Washington, D.C. – Americans are right to be furious about what is going on in Washington now.

I have warned about deficits since I was first elected to Congress eight years ago. We should have heeded the wisdom of the Book of Exodus: make provision for lean years in times of plenty.

Now we are faced with the consequences of ignoring those warnings in the leanest of times for working and middle-class families.

Now Republicans say the middle class has to suck it up to pay for deep tax cuts for the richest of the rich and giveaways to the oil and gas industry, the drug industry, the financial industry, the insurance industry, and on and on. Now Republicans say we have to fire thousands of public school teachers, kick thousands of kids from tough circumstances out of Head Start, deny job training for workers who have lost their jobs, and cut Pell Grants that make college affordable for middle-class kids.

And Republicans will shut down the government unless they get their way on many issues that have nothing to do with spending. The House bill is filled with "riders" to gut environmental protections and undo financial reform and health care reform. They think nothing of holding American families hostage to special interest demands.

I have proven that repeatedly I am willing to compromise. But my father taught me as a young child never to give in to bullies, and that advice has served me pretty well.

I have voted three times to deny Congress and the President their pay in a shutdown to put pressure on everyone to compromise and keep government open. Republicans voted it down each time. I am obliged by the Constitution to show up for work even if the government does shut down, and I will.

How Does the Shutdown Affect You?

Services will continue that are deemed essential for the safety of human life and the protection of property. This includes the armed forces, border patrol, police, fire fighting and federal workers who provide medical care on the job. The Postal Service and the Federal Reserve, which are both self-funded, will also continue to operate.

If a shutdown happens, the government temporarily stops all "non-essential" services. However, "essential services" will continue to operate, such as those listed above. Other federal agencies may cut their services to a bare minimum, and are determining which of their services fall under these rules.

- **IRS** — Tax forms still need to be postmarked by Monday, April 18 (Patriots Day is not a federal holiday and you can no longer send forms to the IRS for processing). Electronic tax returns should be processed, but paper returns will not be, leading to a delay in getting your refund.

- **Social Security** — Benefits for this crucial program do not go through the appropriations process, so they should continue being deposited in your account or mailed to your home. However, staff cuts may delay other services such as enrolling new participants, holding hearings, or resolving problems.

- **Medicare** — Benefits for this program are also exempt from the shutdown, so current participants should not notice any disruption, but new applications could be delayed.

- **Veterans** — VHA hospitals such as VA Puget Sound Health Care System and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics will stay open, and VBA disability compensation will be paid. While VA hospitals will remain open, the last government shutdown saw many veterans' benefits cut or reduced.

- **Visas and Passports** — Prior shutdowns have kept new visa and passport applications from being processed. Embassies will remain open for services for American citizens, but will not conduct visa interviews.
- **National Parks** — National Park Service grounds, museums, and monuments will close, disrupting educational visits and vacation plans.
- **Unemployment** — If the shutdown continued for an extended period, the federal funds that help states pay the costs of their unemployment programs could run out, which would require the state to step in and advance the money to keep their programs running. Otherwise, benefits would be reduced or stopped.
- **Federal Courts** — Federal courts are not affected by the shutdown and remain open.
- **Disaster Response** — Disaster Response is not affected by the shutdown.

Most non-essential government employees will be furloughed from their jobs, only a few exempt employees will be allowed to come into work. Federal employees who are furloughed will not receive pay. Additionally, federal contractors will not be paid during this time and will not be eligible for back pay. Even if you want to work unpaid, federal law prohibits the government from accepting volunteer work.

Related Websites & Articles

- [U.S. Office of Personnel Management - "Guidance and Information on Furlough"](#)

- [Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget - "Planning for Agency Operations During a Lapse in Government Funding"](#)
- [Congressional Research Service - "Shutdown of the Federal Government: Causes, Processes and Effects"](#)
- [Sighting Plans in Washington, DC?](#)
- [Washington Post: Shutdown Plan Details](#)